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AUTHOR Schmidt, Linda J.; Jacobson, Michael H.
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ABSTRACT

A competency-based educational administration program that focuses on the development of administrator/community relations is described in this paper, which is based on the premise that a cooperative relationship is necessary for effective school administration. The course is described in terms of objectives, competencies, methodology, structure, and evaluation. The success of public school administrators is affected by the following factors: administrator personality and management skills; role perceptions and motivations of different constituents; and administrator perceptions of district needs. (LMI)

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A Competency-Based Program of Development of Community Relations in Educational Administration

Linda J. Schmidt, PhD.
Associate Professor—Curriculum and Instruction
Chicago State University

Michael H. Jacobson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor—Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Chicago State University

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Introduction

The current trend toward Educational Reform places the school administrator in a position where he/she is increasingly dealing with the public and public institutions. Often the success of the administrator is not related to the performance of the educational institution in which he/she is working, but in terms of the success of the relationships between the administrator and the public. The public's perception of the success of the administrator is thus more important than the success itself.

Effective schools research points out that the perception of the administrator as a strong leader with easily definable goals and objectives by the staff is an important component of the success of the institution under the direction of the leader. Essential schools research holds that the level of interaction between the leader and the staff is an important element in the commitment of the staff in the improvement of the school.

In the sixty's and the seventy's the interaction between the leader and the constituents was controlled and studied under the movement known as "Human Relations." While a knowledge of human relations is important for understanding elements of motivation and human interaction, the study of the relationship between the leader and the community in which the leader operates is more properly classified as Community Relations.

This difference is due to the fact that the Community has an identity of itself and is

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different from that of each of the constituents who make up the particular community. it is necessary to study and understand the community in order to be able to understand how to properly deal with the construct of community and its effect upon the success and perceived success of a school administrator.

Effective school operation is only possible where there exits an atmosphere of cooperation between the school and the community. With the public's perception that students are not receiving an excellent education, it is inherent for the success of any school [or district] to establish a good working relationship between the school [district] and the community.

The success of a public school employee in dealing with the community is the result of a number of factors:

a. the personality of the administrator displayed when dealing with the community

b. the management skills which the educator brings to the position

c. the role perceptions of the administrator, the community, and the teachers

d. the perception of the educational needs of the school [district] of the administrator

e. the motivation of all individuals involved.

Thus it is clear that the educational practitioner must possess and demonstrate skills in the areas of interpersonal relationships [human relations], leadership skills, group dynamics, development of behavior objectives, and effective organization of a public relations program.

Objectives

At the end of the course, participants will:

a. Acquire knowledge of the history and philosophy of community education.

b. Acquire knowledge of appropriate administrative behaviors.

c. Understand various management models and role perceptions of educational administration

d. Identify and analyze a school/community relationship problem that presently exists in the community in which they live or work.

Competencies

In order to obtain the goals indicated, competencies were identified. They are:

a. Ability to identify relevant characteristics of a community.

b. Ability to analyze the characteristics identified and, given situations, to react appropriately to the situation in terms of the characteristics.

c. Ability to differentiate between internal and external publics and the different modes of dealing with each.

d. Ability to develop public relations programs appropriate for internal and/or external publics.

e. Ability to develop and know when to use appropriate modes of communication suitable for use with internal and external publics.

f. Ability to analyze a problem in terms of school-community relationships.

g. Ability to problem solve using modalities which are appropriate for the public relations needs of the school and community.

h. Ability to identify community service agencies, focus upon how the agencies can assist in the school, and to develop appropriate contacts.

Methodology

Students will master the course objectives through the below listed activities which

are designed to develop the identified competencies:

a. Develop an operational definition of the two communities, internal and external, of a school which impact the school administrator in terms of daily operation and decision making.

b. Develop an analysis of the existing public relations needs of their school, and establish goals and objectives for correcting the problem, develop a plan of attack, and an evaluation plan.

c Develop a policy statement, and design a mode of transmitting the policy to the external public of the school.

d. Develop a plan of administrating a public relations program which utilizes the media in focusing upon the strengths and successes of a school.

e. Develop a plan of improving staff relations through a public relations effort with the internal public of a school.

f. Develop a plan for holding a meeting with the community to present the school's educational improvement plan. As part of this program, students will need to develop the on-going public relations effort which leads up to the presentation meeting.

g. Design a memorandum for distribution to the community regarding a special service available within the school. The student will need to be able to analyze the service into its constituent parts in order to be able to describe the program adequately.

h. Construct a memorandum for distribution to the community regarding a controversial issue. The key in this assignment is balance. In order to be able to aptly present the issue, the administrator must be cognizant of both sides

of the issue.

i. Construct a staff bulletin dealing with a problem within the school. The administrator must be aware of the potential difficulties in preparing a statement for the internal publics for the future smooth operation of the school. The memorandum should be designed in such a manner as to not fractionate the staff.

j. Develop an assessment program to measure the effectiveness of the school's public relations program.

k. Contact two public agencies which have programs which the school can utilize to either work directly with students and/or staff or to improve the public image of the school; develop a fact sheet on the agency; and to give or sponsor a representative of the agency to give a presentation to the class on the agency.

l. Analyze a school-community relationship problem which currently exists between their school and its community [or their community and its school]. This analysis is to contain a description of the community; the history of the events which have lead to the current problem; the statement of the problem; and an analysis of proposed solutions to the problem.

m. Complete a series of simulated administrative problems presented via the In-Basket®. The In-Basket® consists of a series of administrative decision-making simulations, and is usually given to students in a course on Administration and Supervision. The major difference in the implementation of this teaching technique is that the students are given the instructions that they must solve the problem with the best possible solution which takes into consideration the

effects of the decision upon the public image of the school and of the school administrator. The students usually find that "easy" decisions become more difficult when the public relations impact is to be considered. In order to simulate the existence of a principal's cabinet, the solutions are developed in small group situations with the group being responsible for the responses.

Structure

The course is mechanically structured along the lines of the 'normal' graduate course—16 weeks long with three hour classes once per week. However, this is where the similarity ends. The method of presentation of the materials is for the instructor to give a brief lecture interspersed with discussion. At the end of each class session, the students are given one of the competency-based assignments to complete.

Each succeeding week, the students present their solutions to the problem, and the class discusses the most appropriate solution to the problem. There is an attempt at reaching consensus to each solution. Students who had difficulty in reaching an appropriate solution to the problem are simply given the problem again to resolve.

In addition, from the first week on, the students are developing their major projects: the analysis of the school-community relationship problem; the community organization analysis and report; and the solutions to the In-Basket® situations. These are reported to the class by the students as the semester progresses and as the solutions are reached.

Copies of abstracts of the school-community relationship problem report are given to all of the students to keep as reference materials. Students also receive a copy of the community agency report in a standardized format. This results in students completing the course having a community organization resource guide which was developed throughout the course.

Evaluations

Students are evaluated upon their level of activity in the course. The weekly problems are graded on a pass/fail basis, with the only actual grades being issued on the school-community relationship problem.

Feed back to the instructor is via observation of the activity of the group, and a course/instructor evaluation form which is presented about ¾ through the course. Due to the interactive nature of the course, observational evaluations are ongoing and relatively easy to obtain.

Students report that not only have they developed a new appreciation for community relations in terms of their daily decision making skills of a school administrator, but that they have utilized the organizations which were discussed in class, and used the assignment of the school-community relationship problem to reach solutions to existing problems in the schools in which they work.